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News Releases and other News Material

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For further information about this booklet contact Charles Hobbs, editor, News Division, Office of Public Affairs, Room 406-A, U.S Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-4026.

News Releases-

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SHEEP'S BEST FRIEND IS 1,200-POUND COW

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24--A 1,200-pound cow can be a friend-in-need to a 70-pound sheep, but a frightening terror to a 35-pound marauding coyote on the Western range.

U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists say a series of studies in New Mexico confirmed that putting sheep and cattle together cut coyote-caused losses to zero. Sheep losses cost ranchers nearly 5 million dollars each year.

"Coyotes can be intimidated by cattle," range scientist Dean M. Anderson said. "We've seen a cow face down a coyote more than once and force it to make a hasty exit." That's a scenario that wasn't likely in the Old West where sheep and cattle rarely came together on the same range.

Not only are sheep now protected by cattle, but overgrazing of key plant species is less likely. Cattle mainly eat grasses, while sheep prefer broadleaf plants like forbs and some shrubs, noted Anderson. "You can see ecological benefits to rangeland when the animals are together," he said.

"We bonded young sheep with cattle in pens or small paddocks until they got used to each other. Now, when they graze together on rangeland, coyotes keep away," said Anderson, who works at the 193,000-acre Jornada Experimental Range near Las Cruces, N.M.

"When we moved sheep here in 1983, we lost nearly half of our flock of 144 sheep to predators. Over the past three years, none have been lost thanks to the sheep sticking close to cattle and the use of guard dogs," said Anderson of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"Adding guard dogs is extra insurance. Canines are naturally territorial and will chase away coyotes before they approach our animals," he said.

"We use short-haired Akbash dogs from Turkey," said William L. Shupe, who works with Anderson. "Thus far, they seem ideally suited for duty in New Mexico. Longer hair breeds tend to sleep on the job when it gets above 100 degrees here, though they may be suited for cooler climates."

Another plus from having sheep and cattle together is that fencing costs can be reduced. Conventional sheep fencing may approach \$2,000 per mile, while that required to contain cattle may be only half that, Anderson added.

According to the researchers, it costs at most 50 cents per lamb per day to train them to bond with cattle. Costs drop substantially when more sheep are added to the initial group. "This is because subsequent training is done on the job where newcomers to the range learn from the old pros," Anderson said.

"So far the best ratio of sheep to cows during pen bonding seems to be groups of seven to three," he said. He and fellow range scientists also are seeking to identify individual sheep that form the strongest bonds with cattle. They hope this trait can be bred into other animals.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Contact for details Dean M. Anderson or William L. Shupe, Jornada Experimental Range, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Las Cruces, N.M. Telephone: (505) 646-4842.

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USDA CRACKS DOWN ON FRAUD AND ERRORS IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24--Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said today that several steps were taken during 1993 to crack down on fraud and errors in the food stamp program.

"I am committed to absolute integrity and accuracy for all of USDA's food assistance programs. The Food Stamp Program is a top priority because it is our first line of defense against hunger. We must ensure that every dollar goes to needy people."

Under Espy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began several initiatives in the last year to catch and punish people who try to cheat the Food Stamp Program, to ensure that states issue benefits correctly, and to get money back from those who have received benefits improperly.

"We have many more ideas we'll be putting to work," the secretary said, "but for this first year, we know we've helped the states run their programs better, and we know we've made it harder for people to defraud the system."

Espy said the most significant advancement in combatting some types of food stamp fraud has been the development of a national system of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) as a tool to help reduce fraud and misuse of benefits in the Food Stamp Program. In July, he announced a major initiative to promote EBT, with a goal to initiate food stamp EBT projects in all states by 1996.

"EBT uses a plastic card like an ATM card to transfer funds from a recipient's food stamp account to the grocery store's account," the secretary explained. "It creates an electronic trail for each transaction, making fraud easier to detect. Recent tests have shown that EBT can save money in issuance costs."

Six states -- Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Minnesota, Ohio and Iowa -- are operating EBT systems for their food stamp programs, though only Maryland has so far expanded the system statewide. Nearly 30 states are in various stages of planning, Espy said.

Espy listed the following initiatives to help beat fraud and errors:

--Recipient fraud penalties increased: During Fiscal Year 1993, collections on claims against recipients for Intentional Program Violations increased by 9.12 percent.

--Tougher penalties for trafficking: The administration won passage of the Mickey Leland Hunger Relief Act, which included tougher penalties for people and stores that traffic in food stamps, exchanging them for cash. The new law goes even harder on those who traffic food stamps in exchange for drugs, guns, ammunition or explosives.

--Eliminating unauthorized retailers: USDA is increasing its efforts to ensure that retailers who are disqualified or withdrawn from the Food Stamp Program do not continue to redeem food stamp coupons.

--Tax recovery systems: USDA has urged states to develop tax recovery systems to deduct overissued food stamp benefits from the tax refunds of people who are no longer on the Food Stamp Program. More than \$8 million was collected this way in 1993. USDA has persuaded 21 states to have tax recovery programs in 1994.

--Civil prosecutions: USDA and the U.S. Department of Justice are using civil prosecutions under the False Claims Act against retailers caught trafficking in food stamps.

--State trafficking investigations: Thirty-one states have agreements with USDA that allow them to use food stamps in state and local investigations and prosecutions of trafficking.

--Focus on retailers: USDA has continued to focus its investigations on retailers suspected of trafficking. In 1993, investigators uncovered trafficking violations in some 800 stores nationwide.

--States helping states: Espy has requested funds to help state agencies administering the Food Stamp Program to share ideas on error reduction and improving program administration.

--Focus on problem states: States with high food stamp error rates have been targeted for special attention. States may also invest in program improvements rather than pay sanctions to the federal government for unacceptable food stamp error rates.



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ESPY LOWERS INTEREST RATES, EASES REQUIREMENTS FOR FmHA EMERGENCY LOANS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24--Interest rates and eligibility requirements for Farmers Home Administration emergency disaster loans have been reduced, Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced today.

"In keeping with President Clinton's pledge to do whatever we can to help family farmers who suffer severe losses in disasters, such as the Midwest floods, USDA is reducing interest rates on disaster loans to 3.75 percent," Espy said.

"Also, the eligibility requirements for emergency Farmers Home loans will be changed," he said, "so farmers are not put at a disadvantage because they received other federal assistance or were prudent enough to buy crop insurance."

Interest rates for disaster loans had not been changed since they were set at 4.5 percent in 1988. "Today's action brings the rates to a more realistic level in relation to other federal and private rates," Espy said.

To qualify for an FmHA disaster loan, family farmers have to show at least a 30 percent loss from their normal production. Until now, other income, such as payments from the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and crop insurance, were deducted from loss figures in determining eligibility. Those payments will no longer be included in eligibility calculations.

"Reducing interest rates and easing eligibility will assist borrowers in meeting their financial obligations not only to FmHA but to other creditors as well," Espy said. "Rural businesses as well as the entire rural economy benefit from the financial stability of the family farm."

Espy strongly urged farmers who need assistance to visit their lenders, both public and private, as soon as possible, especially in the Midwest. "It is particularly important for those who think they may need FmHA loans to get in early even if they are not sure they will qualify. There is an eight month deadline from the time a county is declared a disaster area to apply for disaster loans."

So far, USDA agencies have provided more than a billion dollars in assistance to family farmers in the nine Midwest states that were hit by the devastating floods last year.

As of January 6, family farmers in Illinois had received \$53.3 million; in Iowa, \$233.3 million; Kansas, \$84.8 million; Minnesota, \$295.6 million; Missouri, \$107.5 million; Nebraska, \$61.5 million; North Dakota, \$118.9 million; South Dakota, \$93.6 million; and Wisconsin, \$35 million.



Release No. 0062.94
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USDA PROPOSES TO REGULATE IMPORTATION OF UNMANUFACTURED WOOD

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to establish comprehensive regulations for the importation of unmanufactured wood articles. These regulations would require treatments, such as debarking and fumigation, for logs, lumber, wood chips and certain wood packing materials.

Two public hearings are scheduled to be held on the proposal. The first is on Feb. 10 at Cheatham Hall, World Forestry Center, 4033 S.W. Canyon Road, Portland, Ore. The second is on Feb. 23 at the Jefferson Auditorium, USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C.

"Sawmills and other wood processing companies in the Pacific Northwest want to import and process logs from foreign countries," said B. Glen Lee, deputy administrator for plant protection and quarantine in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "APHIS has no current regulations that specifically address foreign unmanufactured wood products because there was little interest in importing them in the past."

Lee said the proposed regulations are necessary because trees grown in many foreign locations are attacked by a wide variety of exotic plant pests and pathogens that could be detrimental to U.S. forests. Treating this wood to kill or remove these pests will prevent their introduction into the country.

In developing the proposal, APHIS officials worked with federal and state regulatory and forestry officials and solicited public comments to help determine the best way to regulate this commodity. As part of the development of the proposed rule, USDA's Forest Service conducted pest-risk assessments for the importation of certain types of wood from Siberia, New Zealand and Chile.

Based on information received from these sources, APHIS is proposing to establish specific importation requirements for particular articles from certain countries; establish a universal importation alternative for some regulated articles so importers could import these articles from any country if they meet certain requirements; and establish a procedure for making case-by-case evaluations to allow importation of unmanufactured wood articles under conditions less stringent than the universal alternative.

Importers would also have to obtain an import permit from APHIS in most cases. Many wood articles could be imported without a certificate issued by the plant protection services of the country of origin. Regulated articles would be subject to inspection by APHIS officials at the port of entry.

Notice of this proposal was published in the Jan. 20 Federal Register.

Both public hearings begin at 10 a.m. local time. Persons interested in attending should contact Richard Kelly at (301) 436-5455.

Written comments on this proposal also will be accepted if they are received on or before April 20. An original and three copies of written comments referring to docket number 91-074-3 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

APHIS is also accepting comments submitted to an electronic bulletin board. APHIS is experimenting with this electronic system to enhance public participation in rulemaking, consistent with recommendations of the National Information Infrastructure and the National Performance Review. You may submit comments to the electronic bulletin board and review on-line comments posted to this bulletin board by other commenters. To access the bulletin board via modem, dial (703) 243-9696. Set your modem parity, data bits, and stop bits to N, 8, 1. You can also access the bulletin board via INTERNET with the command TELNET tmn.com. To log in to the bulletin board, use the user ID "woodrule" and the password "aphis23."

Written comments may be reviewed as soon as received at USDA, Room 1141 South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.



Release No. 0065.94
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NAL SPONSORS INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION

BELTSVILLE, Md., Jan. 26--Representatives from agricultural organizations in South American and Caribbean countries are meeting with personnel from the National Agricultural Library (NAL) January 24-28 in Washington, D.C. and Beltsville, Maryland, for an intensive workshop on "agricultural information transfer and networking."

According to NAL Director Joe Howard, the meetings are addressing ways "to improve and strengthen the sharing of agricultural information between the United States and countries represented at the workshop."

"In agriculture, as in all fields, information is key to progress," Howard said. "By sharing research results and new farming techniques between countries, the world as a whole stands to benefit with increased food production and less hunger. At the workshop we are discussing methods for routinely exchanging this information."

Countries represented at the workshop include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad/Tobago and Venezuela. Joining NAL and the foreign officials are representatives from U.S. organizations, private and public, that work with agricultural information. Canadian and British agricultural information specialists are also attending.

"At the end of the workshop we want to have produced an outline for a comprehensive regional plan for agricultural infrastructure development," Howard said. "We want this plan to improve national systems and enhance regional and international cooperation, communications and coordination. The plan should overcome technological isolation and develop structures that can provide cost-effective access to information."

Howard said that planning during the workshop is focusing on agricultural research and extension information transfer and networking to support "national economic development and promote capacity building in the agricultural sector."

With NAL, other sponsors of the workshop are the Inter-American Development Bank, the Associates of the National Agricultural Library, the Inter-American Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists and the U.S. Agricultural Information Network.

NAL is one of three national libraries of the United States, with the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. It is the largest agricultural library in the world.

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MISSISSIPPI SELECTED TO HOST PRESIDENT'S COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

JACKSON, Miss., Jan. 26--George E. Irvin Sr., State Director, Farmers Home Administration, joins Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy and President Clinton to launch the application process for the Administration's Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) revitalization program and to announce a regional workshop in Greenville, Miss. February 14, 1994 at the Washington County Convention Center.

"We are pleased to host this workshop and look forward to actively working with the other participating states in the region which includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Tennessee," said Irvin.

The Clinton Administration is committed to revitalizing distressed communities and creating economic opportunities for all residents, said Espy.

"We know that America works when Americans work," said Espy. "The Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities will bring together all segments in an area--from government officials, to business leaders, to church leaders and to nonprofit organizers. All will have the common goal of revitalizing their communities and creating jobs.

"Because this program is built around strategic planning development by rural communities, it will help them achieve their own vision for the kind of community they want to have in the 21st Century."

Three Empowerment Zones and 30 Enterprise Communities will be designated specifically for rural areas after a competitive application process. The rural designations will be made by Espy. The six Empowerment Zones and 65 Enterprise Community designations for urban areas will be made by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry G. Cisneros.

All designations will be made in consultation with the President's Community Enterprise Board, comprised of Cabinet members and advisors to the President on domestic issues. The board is chaired by Vice President Gore.

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities will receive special consideration for various federal programs and other assistance, including social service block grants, new tax exempt Facility Bonds, tax breaks for employment, and other special consideration for existing federal programs.

The difference in the benefits for Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities is that Empowerment Zones will qualify for tax credits for each worker who resides in the zones; Section 179 expending is increased; and grants are substantially larger.

One special feature in the EZ/EC program will benefit the areas that apply but are not designated. Communities that apply but are not chosen will qualify for assistance in seeking regulation waivers for federal programs and if there is a Community Development Corporation within the jurisdiction, that corporation can qualify to receive tax preferred contributions from donors. Eight CDC's in rural areas will be selected under this separate program.

To apply for a designation under the EZ/EC program, comprehensive strategic plans must be submitted. The plans must emphasize four principles: 1. Economic opportunity, including job creation; 2. Community development, including comprehensive approaches to access to affordable housing, human services, economic development, public safety and a clean environment; 3. Community partnership, involving participation of all segments of the community; and 4. Strategic vision for change, identifying clear goals for the community.

Poverty, unemployment and other need factors will be critical in determining eligibility but play a less significant role than the four key principles.

"This is not government as usual," said Under Secretary of Agriculture Bob Nash, who helped to create and who will oversee the program at USDA. "The development program provides a means for rural towns and regions to work together to develop their own plans to overcome poverty, unemployment and other social problems. President Clinton's EZ/EC program is one more way in which we are reinventing the federal government to be more responsive to community concerns."

Applications for the EZ/EC program will require communities to submit very few forms. Instead, the key will be a comprehensive development plan that involves community residents, local and state governments, nonprofit and private sector groups and organizations, regional planning agencies, and other private and public entities.

In the spirit of Vice President Gore's goal to make government and information more accessible to Americans all across the nation, USDA will use the Internet Mail System to receive questions and inquiries for more information on the EZ/EC program. Rural and urban communities may receive information or applications from Internet by sending a message to info@ezec.usda.gov.

People interested in receiving a copy of an application or getting more details about the program should contact a state office of the Farmers Home Administration or call 202-690-1045. Mississippi residents may call Bettye W. Oliver at (800) 847-6932 or Jane Jones at (601) 965-4318. The deadline to apply will be 4 p.m. EDT, Thursday, June 30. Applications may be mailed or hand-delivered. Rural applications should be mailed to: USDA, Rural Development Administration, EZ/EC Team, Room 5405, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-3200.

Interested individuals or groups are encouraged to attend the regional workshop on February 14, 1994 at the Washington County Convention Center, 1040 Raceway Road, Greenville, Miss. The sessions will run from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and will include materials on the program, strategic planning, and successful approaches to partnership building.



Release No. 0067.94
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DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY NAMED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26--Adela Backiel, a national specialist in natural resources policy, has been named deputy assistant secretary of agriculture for natural resources and environment. In this role, she will oversee the programs and activities of the U.S. Forest Service.

"USDA has a mission to strengthen and enhance natural resources, and Adela's expertise is a tremendous addition to our team," said James R. Lyons, assistant secretary for natural resources and environment. Lyons directs the policies and oversees the activities and programs of both the U.S. Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service.

Backiel had been with the Congressional Research Service for the last 10 years, serving as a specialist in natural resources policy and manager of its environmental protection section, providing analysis, research, and technical advice to Members of Congress and congressional committees.

She has specialized in forestry, public lands, and the global environment. Prior to joining the Congressional Research Service, she served as a forester and soil scientist with the U.S. Forest Service, in Washington, D.C., and the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

An elected Fellow of the Society of American Foresters, Backiel received its "Young Forester Leadership Award" in 1991. In 1993, she chaired the society's National Committee on Forest Policy. She has also served on the board of directors of American Forests.

Backiel, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, received a master's degree in public policy and administration from the University of Washington in Seattle in 1980 and a B.S. in forest resources from the university in 1974.



Release No. 0068.94
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USDA PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

WASHINGTON, January 26 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will provide emergency food stamp aid for households that incurred disaster-related expenses as a result of the earthquake that struck southern California on Jan. 17.

"Because of the destruction of homes and the disruption of lives, we have suspended the normal food stamp rules to help people as quickly as possible," Espy said.

The Secretary noted that USDA developed the emergency plan in cooperation with local Los Angeles disaster assistance officials. He expects issuance of emergency food stamps to be available to residents of Los Angeles County who were affected by the earthquake. Issuance began Jan. 24 and will last for 15 days.

Espy said families currently participating in the Food Stamp Program may also be eligible for emergency stamps if they were adversely affected by the disaster. A separate list of the sites is attached.

Ellen Haas, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Food and Consumer Services, who has direct authority over the Food Stamp Program, said the USDA moved quickly to speed assistance to people in need.

"We want to provide aid as quickly and with as little red tape as possible," Haas said. She emphasized that people not normally eligible for food stamps may be able to receive help temporarily and the department is working with state and local officials to safeguard the emergency program against fraud and abuse.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is also providing commodity foods for emergency feeding of earthquake victims.

In addition to the commodities and emergency food stamp aid, USDA is working to ensure the safety of dams and is assisting in fighting fires.

The Soil Conservation Service is working with the California Department Water Resources Dam Safety personnel to review dams and other water storage facilities that may have received earthquake damage. It is also checking for possible damage on SCS-designed or cost-shared structures, including reservoirs, irrigation systems and sediment basins.

Further, SCS personnel are checking for earthquake-impaired water courses that could cause damage to life and property downstream due to blockages. These could be considered for immediate assistance under the Emergency Watershed Program.

The Forest Service has helped suppress fires in the earthquake area, three of which were earthquake-related. Road crews are clearing earthquake-related highway debris and assessing damage on Forest Service roads. Working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Forest Service is providing logistical support in receiving and distributing federal emergency personnel, equipment, and supplies. It provided standby air tankers to assist in suppressing fires, as well as strike teams of hand crews and engines.

Forest Service law enforcement personnel are assisting the California Highway Patrol in enforcing speed and lane control laws on the Angeles Forest and Angeles Crest Highways. These two routes are an alternate to Highway 14, which collapsed during the earthquake and are expected to be heavily used by commuters and residents.

LIST OF EMERGENCY FOOD STAMP PROGRAM LOCATIONS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

COMPTON	211 E ALONDRA BLVD., COMPTON 90220	310-603-8401
CUDAHY	8130 S ATLANTIC, CUDAHY 90201	213-560-6001
FLORENCE	1740 E GAGE AVE., LA 90001	213-588-7001
NORWALK	12727 NORWAK BLVD., NORWAK 90650	310-807-7820
PARAMOUNT	1215 E SAN ANTONIO DR., LONG BEACH 90807	310-984-9936
HI GARDENS	12223 E CARSON, HAWAIIAN GARDENS 90716	213-809-7801
POMONA	2040 W HOLT AVE., POMONA 91766	909-885-5201
S FAMILY	17800 "A" SANTA FE AVE., R DOMINQUEZ 90221	310-761-2400
E VALLEY	14550 LANARK ST., PANORAMA CITY 91402	818-901-4101
GLENDALE	225 E BROADWAY, GLENDALE 91205	818-500-3003
LANCASTER	349-B E AVE.K-6, LANCASTER 93535	805-723-4001
SANTA CLARA	27233 CAMP PLENTY RD., CANYON COUNTRY 91351	805-723-3400
METRO NORTH	2910 BEVERLY BLVD., LA 90057	213-738-3701
PASADENA	955 N LAKE AVE., PASADENA 91104	818-791-6302
SW FAMILY	923 REDONDO BLVD., INGLEWOOD 90302	310-419-5402
WEST LA	11390 W OLYMPIC BLVD., LA 90064	310-312-5101

W VALLEY	9035 CANOGA, CONOGA PARK	91304	818-709-2256
SAN FERNANDO	12847 ARROYO ST., SYLMAR	91342	818-837-2101
BELVEDERE	5445 WHITTIER BLVD., LA	90022	213-727-4314
EXPOSITION PARK	3965 S VERNONT AVE., LA	90043	213-730-3201
LINCOLN HEIGHTS	4077 N MISSION RD., LA	90032	213-342-8141
METRO EAST	2855 E OLYMPIC BLVD., LA	90023	213-260-3501
METRO FAMILY	2707 GRAND AVE., LA	90007	213-744-6601
SAN GABRIEL	9521 E VALLEY BLVD., ELMONTE	91731	818-575-5511
CIVIC CENTER	813 E 4TH PL., LA	90013	213-974-0201
ECHO PARK	2711 BEVERLY, LA	90057	310-738-4301
RANCHO PARK	10961 W PICO BLVD., LA	90064	310-312-6701
SOUTH CENTRAL	10728 S CENTRAL AVE., LA	90059	213-583-4156
SOUTH WEST SPEC	1326 W IMPERIAL HWY., LA	90044	213-418-2202

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Release No. 0069.94
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USDA ANNOUNCES THAT ARIZONA HAS ERADICATED PSEUDORABIES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27--Arizona is the ninth state to eradicate the livestock disease pseudorabies from all of its domestic swine herds, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

"Animal health officials and swine producers in Arizona deserve recognition for their accomplishment in pseudorabies eradication," said Billy G. Johnson, deputy administrator of veterinary services in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Arizona joins New Mexico, Mississippi, Wyoming, New York, Connecticut, Alaska, Maine and Utah in achieving Stage V or "Free" status in the five-stage state-federal-industry cooperative pseudorabies eradication program.

Johnson said states participating in the eradication program advance from Stage I to Stage V. Stage I is preparation. Stage II is control. Stage III is mandatory clean-up of all pseudorabies-infected herds. Stage IV is surveillance to make sure no infection remains. Stage V, pseudorabies-free status, is achieved if a state in Stage IV goes for one year without finding an infected swine herd.

Pseudorabies is a viral disease most prevalent in swine, often causing newborn piglets to die. Older pigs can survive infection, becoming carriers of the pseudorabies virus for life. Other animals, such as cattle, sheep, dogs and cats, can become infected from swine. Cattle and sheep infected with pseudorabies may show signs known as "mad itch" by scratching and biting themselves. In animals other than swine, pseudorabies can cause sudden death. The virus does not cause illness in humans.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: *The status of the various states in the pseudorabies eradication program is as follows:*

Stage 1: Florida, Iowa, New Jersey and Rhode Island.

Stage 2: Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Stage 2/3: Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and North Carolina.

Stage 3: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Stage 4: Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon and Washington.

Stage 5: Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Utah and Wyoming.

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Release No. 0070.94
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USDA PROPOSES TO TOUGHEN ANIMAL WELFARE LICENSE RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing an amendment to Animal Welfare Act regulations that will make it tougher to renew an animal welfare license and make it easier to trace missing pets.

Comments on the proposal are due by Feb. 28. If approved, changes could take effect by this summer.

The Department is proposing that licensed animal dealers, exhibitors and auction sale operators, totaling nearly 6,000 licensees, must maintain standardized animal identification records on USDA forms. Currently, although some form of animal identification records is required, that requirement does not include use of a standardized form.

Under the proposed change, licensees would have to certify that they are in compliance with the new identification requirements, as well as other requirements of the Act, before their license is renewed.

"We need this change to strengthen enforcement under the Animal Welfare Act," said Patricia Jensen, deputy assistant secretary for marketing and inspection services. "We want to better equip the inspectors in the Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service so they can control pet trafficking."

Under the Animal Welfare Act, animal dealers, exhibitors, and auction sale operators must be licensed or registered with APHIS. The Act requires that regulated individuals and businesses provide animals with care and treatment according to standards established by APHIS.

"Animals protected by the law must be provided with adequate housing, handling, sanitation, food, water, transportation, veterinary care and shelter," said Jensen. "Animal Welfare Act regulations also prohibit licensees from obtaining animals under false pretenses, misrepresentation, or deception."

APHIS enforces the Act through unannounced inspections. Dale Schwindaman, APHIS's deputy administrator of regulatory enforcement and animal care, said that in FY 1992 the agency increased its total annual animal care compliance inspections by 29 percent. It imposed nearly \$300,000 in fines for violations of the Act and revoked or suspended 14 licenses of regulated individuals or businesses.

"Currently, APHIS's field force of animal care inspectors is under instruction to increase its time spent examining animal identification records," he said. "Proper recordkeeping by licensees enables our inspectors to trace back the source of individual animals and provide a means of comparison with records of other licensees in the same market chain."

The proposed amendment was published in the Federal Register on Dec. 28. An original and three copies of written comments referring to docket number 92-158-1 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782 before Feb. 28, 1994.

Comments may be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141 South Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.



Release No. 0072.94
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MICROBIOLOGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO MEET IN ORLANDO

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28--The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods will meet Jan. 31 to Feb. 4, at the Residence Inn Orlando, 7975 Canada Ave, Orlando, Fla.

The committee advises the secretaries of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the development of microbiological criteria to assess the safety and wholesomeness of food.

The committee also recommends criteria for microorganisms that indicate whether food has been processed with good manufacturing practices, according to Dr. H. Russell Cross, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The five-day meeting, open to the public on a space-available basis, will include discussion of the following topics:

- ◆ Meat and Poultry Working Group--Mon., Jan. 31; 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ◆ Risk Analysis Working Group--Tues., Feb. 1; 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ◆ Plenary Session--Wed., Feb. 2; 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ◆ Seafood Working Group--Thurs., Feb 3; 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
- ◆ Plenary Session--Fri., Feb. 4; 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

Comments may be filed before or after the meeting with Craig Fedchock, Advisory Committee Specialist, USDA, FSIS, Room 2151-So. Bldg., 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250, (202) 720-9150.

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Release No. 0073.94
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USDA PROPOSES CHANGES IN COTTON CLASSING REGULATIONS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to amend regulations governing cotton classification services provided to cotton growers. The proposed amendments are aimed at increasing the accuracy of fiber quality measurements performed by high-volume, precision instruments, commonly referred to as "HVT" classifications.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposal would modify the current classification system by adding a new procedure known as module averaging. The proposed procedure would ask cotton ginners to furnish AMS a module or trailer identification number for each bale of cotton for which a sample is submitted for classification.

Under the proposal, quality factor determinations for each bale in a module or trailer group would be averaged. Then the average value for each factor would be assigned to each bale. This approach to assigning quality measurements uses sound statistical principles to more accurately describe the quality of cotton.

This proposal is being offered after concluding three successful years of module averaging in a voluntary pilot project, said Hatamiya.

The secretary of agriculture's advisory committee on cotton marketing has recommended using the module averaging procedure for the entire 1994 crop.

Details of the proposed rule are scheduled for publication in the Jan. 31 Federal Register. Copies and additional information are available from Craig Shackelford, Cotton Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2641-So. Bldg., P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C., 20090, (202) 720-2259.

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Release No. 0074.94
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USDA CHANGES HEARING DATES FOR MARKETING ORDER PROPOSAL FOR TART CHERRIES

WASHINGTON, Jan 28 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced a change in the dates for a public hearing on a proposal for a federal marketing agreement and order for tart cherries grown in Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin.

Hearing sessions will be held in Portland, Ore., Feb. 15-17 at the Airport Holiday Inn, 8439 Northeast Columbia Blvd. All sessions will begin at 9 a.m. This announcement supersedes a Dec. 23 program announcement that listed Feb. 14-16 as the Oregon hearing dates.

Previous public sessions were held Dec. 15-17 in Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jan 10-11 in Rochester, N.Y.; and Jan. 13 in Provo, Utah.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the Cherry Marketing Institute, a major industry organization, submitted the proposal on behalf of interested cherry growers and processors (handlers). The proposed agreement and order would authorize volume regulation and grade, size, maturity, pack and container regulations, including mandatory inspection. The proposal also would authorize production, processing and marketing research and promotion projects.

Growers, handlers, processors and others who wish to present evidence on the proposal but were unable to attend any of the previous sessions should attend the Portland session. After the hearing process is completed, USDA will evaluate the hearing record and prepare a recommended decision for public comment. "The secretary of agriculture would then decide whether or not to call for a referendum to determine producer and processor support for the proposed order," Hatamiya said.

The order would become effective only if approved by at least two-thirds of those growers voting in the referendum, or by those growers producing at least two-thirds of the volume of tart cherries represented in the referendum and grown during a period set by the secretary of agriculture. The order must be approved by processors voting in the referendum who processed more than 50 percent of the total volume of all processed tart cherries during the representative period. Authority for the order rests in the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, Hatamiya said.

Copies of the notice of hearing published in the Nov. 30 Federal Register, and amendments published Dec. 23 and scheduled for publishing Jan. 31, may be obtained from Gary D. Olson, Officer-in-Charge, Northwest Marketing Field Office, 1220 SW Third Ave., Room 369, Portland, Ore. 97204, telephone (503) 326-2724 or FAX (503) 326-7440; or from Kenneth G. Johnson, Marketing Specialist, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 720-5127 or FAX (202) 720-5698.

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Program Announcements-

Release No. 0057.94
Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

USDA ANNOUNCES 1993 WOOL AND MOHAIR SUPPORT PRICES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that support prices for wool and mohair for 1993 marketings will be \$2.04 per pound for shorn wool and \$4.738 per pound for mohair.

Mohair is being supported at 85 percent of the percentage of parity at which shorn wool is being supported.

Wool on unshorn lambs will be supported, as in the past, at a level determined by a formula based on the hundredweight of live, unshorn lambs marketed.

Further details appeared in the Federal Register on January 14.

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Release No. 0063.94
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Charles Hobbs (202) 720-4026

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES, MARKETING CERTIFICATE RATES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25--Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture James W. Schroder today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

--long grain whole kernels:	12.09 cents per pound
--medium grain whole kernels:	11.41 cents per pound
--short grain whole kernels:	11.27 cents per pound
--broken kernels:	6.04 cents per pound

Based upon these milled rice world market prices, loan deficiency payment rates, gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price, and marketing certificate rates are zero.

The prices announced today reflect changes in the level of world rice prices and adjustments to estimated domestic rice milling yields.

These announced prices are effective today at 3 p.m. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Feb. 1 at 3 p.m. EST.

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Release No. 0064.94
Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

U.S. TOBACCO INDUSTRY TO BUY 324 MILLION POUNDS OF 1994-CROP BURLEY TOBACCO

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that U.S. cigarette manufacturers plan to purchase 324 million pounds (farm sales weight) of 1994-crop burley tobacco, 37 million pounds fewer than 1993-crop purchase intentions.

Grant Buntrock, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said major domestic cigarette manufacturers are required by statute to report annually to USDA their intended purchases of burley tobacco from U.S. auction markets and producers.

Data on intended purchases, the average annual burley exports for the preceding three years and the amount of tobacco needed to attain reserve stock levels are used to determine USDA's annual burley tobacco marketing quota. However, the actual burley quota cannot be reduced to a level more than 10 percent below the previous year--542.7 million pounds for 1994 (603 million pounds multiplied by 0.90). The 1994 quota will be announced by Feb. 1.

Buntrock said annual burley exports for 1991, 1992 and 1993 averaged 183.8 million pounds, down 22 million pounds from the 1990-92 average.

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Release No. 0071.94
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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27--Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price or AWP), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (leaf grade 4, micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), and the coarse count adjustment (CCA) in effect from 5:00 p.m. today through 3:59 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 3. The user marketing certificate payment rate announced today is in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Jan. 28 through midnight Thursday, Feb. 3.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

A further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 113 percent of the 1993 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 3.36 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations:

I.	Calculated AWP	59.12 cents per pound
	1993 Base Loan Rate	52.35 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	113
II.	USNE Price	76.20 cents per pound
	NE Price	<u>- 72.84</u> cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	3.36 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will be made.

This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

NE Price	72.84
Adjustments:	
Avg. U.S. spot market location	11.91
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.50
Avg. U.S. location	0.31
Sum of Adjustments	<u>- 13.72</u>
Calculated AWP	59.12
Further AWP adjustment	<u>- 0</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	59.12 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment

COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0.13 cents/lb.
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The Northern Europe Coarse Count Price cannot be calculated because quotes for at least three growths are not available. Therefore, in accordance with regulation, the CCA for the latest available week shall continue to be applicable. This week's CCA is 0.13 cents per pound, the same as was announced on Jan. 20, 1994.

Because the AWP is above 52.35 cents per pound--the base quality loan rate for both the 1992 and 1993 marketing years-- the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the loan rate, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is above the 1993-crop loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available during this period.

The USNE price has exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for four consecutive weeks and the AWP has not exceeded 130 percent of the 1993 crop year base quality loan rate in any week of the 4-week period. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 2.11 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1994. Relevant data are summarized below:

Week	For the		User Marketing	Certificate	
	Friday through		Payment		
	Thursday	USNE	NE	Rate	
	Period Ending	Price	Price	cents/lb
1	Jan. 6, 1994	66.75	63.75	1.75	
2	Jan. 13, 1994	69.00	66.10	1.65	
3	Jan. 20, 1994	72.75	69.05	2.45	
4	Jan. 27, 1994	76.20	72.84	2.11	

Next week's AWP, CCA and user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced on Thursday, Feb. 3, at 5 p.m.



